



Pat Quinn, Governor
Rocco J. Claps, Director

CHICAGO – On June 27, 2010. Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill into law that is aimed at reducing bullying in schools. Senate Bill 3266 (http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus_pf.asp?DocNum=3266&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=51081&GAID=10&SessionID=76&GA=96) expands the definition of bullying, requires gang prevention training in Illinois schools, and creates the School Bullying Prevention Task Force to examine the causes of bullying. Rocco Claps, Director, Illinois Department of Human Rights introduced the Governor and thanked the bill's sponsors and supporters. "I am honored to have worked in partnership with the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance (<http://www.illinoissafeschools.org>) on passage of this important legislation," Claps said. "Supporting fairness, equity, and the safety of kids is a major priority for Governor Quinn and I am particularly proud that he has signed this bill into law."

"Students do their best in school when they are able to focus and concentrate on their studies. Students who are being bullied for any reason are not able to do their best," said Governor Quinn. "This new law helps schools protect students so they can succeed both inside and outside of the classroom."

Bullying can severely impact a student's mental health and can impede their ability to participate in extracurricular activities. The new law expands the definition of "bullying" to include any communication made through writing or electronic means such as text messaging, e-mail or social networking Web sites. Anything from race, gender, religion, a physical disability or sexual orientation can be targets for school bullying.

Each school district and private school will now be required to develop and maintain a policy on bullying that must be updated every two years. Public schools are already required to have such policies in place.

Additionally, the legislation creates the School Bullying Prevention Task Force, which will be comprised of 15 members appointed by the superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The Task Force will investigate the causes and consequences of bullying in schools. The Task Force will develop strategies aimed at preventing bullying in schools and will submit a report by March 1, 2011.

Senate Bill 3266, sponsored by Sen. Kimberly Lightford (D-Westchester) and Rep. Karen Yarbrough (D-Broadview), received widespread support from groups such as the Illinois African-American Commission, the ARC of Illinois, the ACLU, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, ISBE and others. The legislation passed through the Illinois General Assembly nearly unanimously.

The new law also requires school districts and private schools to develop plans for bullying and gang prevention. Schools will join with the state and local law enforcement agencies to educate students about conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, personal goal setting and resisting peer pressure.

Governor Quinn signed the legislation at the Nettlehorst School in Chicago where students were celebrating Kids' Pride Fest. The law goes into effect immediately.

(Listen to Governor Quinn's words at the bill signing) http://www.state.il.us/cms/download/mp3_iisradio/gov-6-27.mp3